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SUBJECT: CANADIAN IMMIGRANTS ON THE RISE, BUT SO ARE "LOST"
DEPORTEES

11. (U) Summary: In addition to accepting an increasing number of immigrants (especially high-skilled workers), Canada is also a growing destination for asylum seekers and refugees. Canada has successfully managed its immigration policies to maintain a reputation as a successful model of diversity and multi-culturalism, but is facing growing enforcement problems. The Auditor General concluded in May that the Canadian Border Services Protection Agency (CBSA) had lost track of approximately 41,000 illegals it had ordered to leave the country; most are failed refugee applicants. The government claimed in response that it had already improved its deportation processes over the past five years while acknowledging that it still needed to do a better job to maintain the integrity of its immigration system. End summary.

INCREASED IMMIGRATION FILLS JOBS AND ASSISTS REFUGEES...

12. (U) With an overall population of about 33 million people but declining birthrates, Canada is increasingly looking overseas to sustain both its population and its economic growth. In 2007, Canada accepted the highest number of temporary and permanent residents as well as foreign students in its history -- 429,649 people -- of whom approximately 250,000 were new immigrants. It admitted 12 pct more foreign workers in 2007 than 2006. The government has estimated that Canada's labor demands will continue to grow and that, by 2012, immigration will account for all net growth of the labor force. According to the 2006 census, Canada's population over the past five years grew by 1.6 million -- of whom 1.1 million were immigrants. An estimated 6.2 Canadian residents are now foreign-born, with 58 pct born in Asia or the Middle East. An estimated 63 pct of Canada's total foreign-born population have settled in the three largest cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

13. (U) Canada also maintains a generous in-Canada refugee protection system (preferring "refugees" or "protected persons" to "asylum seekers" for the vast majority who apply in-country). According to a senior Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) official, Canada has a high rate of acceptance compared to other Western countries. In 2006, 22,944 individuals submitted claims for refugee protection within Canada, of whom Canada approved about 47 pct. Mexico was the country of origin of the highest number of applications that Canada approved in 2006, followed by China, Colombia, Sri Lanka, India, and Haiti. Of all refugees living in Canada at the end of 2006, more were from Columbia than from any other single country, however. In December 2004, Canada and the United States had signed a "Safe Third Country Agreement" stipulating that persons seeking refugee status must make a claim in the first country in which they arrive, unless they qualify for an exception. The Federal Court of Canada in November 2007 struck down the Agreement, but the Federal Court of Appeal granted a stay on January 31,

ruling that it is in the public interest that the Agreement remain in place pending an appeal by the government.

14. (SBU) According to CIC, the refugee acceptance rate in 2007 decreased to approximately 43 pct, largely the result of an influx of Mexicans seeking asylum in Canada. The CIC official commented that Mexican asylum seekers seemed recently to have "discovered there is a country north of the United States." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics indicate that 74 pct of all asylum applications lodged by Mexican nationals worldwide in 2007 were submitted in Canada, compared to 24 pct in the United States. The CIC official commented that Mexican applicants in Canada tend to be better educated and wealthier than those in the United States, as they had managed to travel farther.

15. (U) In addition to its in-country national refugee protection system, Canada also resettles refugees from abroad through close coordination with international partners, including UNHCR. In 2006, Canada resettled approximately 10,700 refugees from overseas. Canada has played a major role in helping to resettle certain particularly vulnerable groups. In March 2008, Canada announced that it would accept between 1,800 and 2,000 new Iraqi refugees, more than double the number in 2007. In May 2007, Canada stated that it would resettle up to 5,000 Bhutanese refugees living in Nepalese camps over the next three to five years. In 2006, Canada accepted 810 Karen refugees from Burma who had been living in camps in Thailand, and, in early 2007, it accepted an additional 1,850 refugees from Burma.

...BUT ALSO LEADS TO PROBLEMS

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16. (U) While Canada's immigration policies have helped augment its work force and have assisted tens of thousands of refugees, they have also created a number of complications. According to a May 2008 Report of the Auditor General of Canada, as of September 2007, CBSA had issued about 63,000 removal orders or immigration warrants for failed refugee seekers or illegal immigrants, but could only verify the departure of approximately 22,000 individuals -- leaving the location of the remaining 41,000 people unknown. The report criticized CBSA for its failure to investigate the vast majority of these cases under the pretext of not wanting to use scarce resources to locate people who may have already left Canada on their own accord without officially notifying the government. The report also noted that the government had failed to fulfill a 2004 commitment to introduce the following year a new "Global Case Management System" better to track these deportees. During a May 6 news conference, the Auditor General commented that the apparent ease with which so many people can elude the CBSA and illegally stay in Canada reduces the incentive for others to comply with immigration laws and damages the integrity of the immigration and refugee processes.

17. (U) According to Martin Collacott of the Fraser Institute (a conservative Canadian think tank), many overseas workers also simply stay in Canada after their work permits end. The Auditor General's report acknowledged this possibility, and expressed concern that CBSA did not track whether individuals whose temporary resident permits had expired had left the country as required. Canada issued 106,750 temporary foreign worker permits in 2006, and 103,000 in the first nine months of 2007.

18. (U) Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day insisted to the media on May 6 that, while CBSA should improve its tracking system, Canada has been doing a better job of deporting illegal immigrants, citing deportations of 12,600 people (15 pct of them criminals) in 2006-2007, up from 8,700 (17 pct of

them criminals) in 2002-2003. Day nonetheless pledged that the government would pursue implementation of an improved tracking system.

¶9. (SBU) The CIC official commented to poloff that, while Canada's refugee and immigration must improve, even "losing" 41,000 deportees was not unreasonable, claiming that the United States and other countries have far many more illegal residents whom they are unable to locate.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) While the Canadian government admits the need to improve its system of tracking would-be migrants, its immigration policies have already had positive affects, including helping to fill labor shortages that experts predict will only worsen. Immigration has also helped Canada create one of the most diverse societies in the world, with one in five Canadians now an immigrant. Only Australia has a higher percentage of foreign born residents. As Canada's job market continues to grow, especially in the resource-rich western provinces, and as it maintains its generous refugee assistance programs, Canada will need better to respond to the challenge of admitting increasing numbers while striving to ensure adequate security and enforce its own laws and regulations.

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